

Message Text

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT, PARA 3)

BRUSSELS ALSO FOR USEEC

E.O. 11652: N.A.
TAGS: PINT, SP
SUBJECT: PSOE MEMBER OF CONSTITUTIONAL SUBCOMMITTEE
WITHDRAWS, ACCUSING UCD OF HAVING BROKEN THE CONSENSUS

REF: MADRID 2436

1. SUMMARY. PSOE CONSTITUTIONAL SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBER
PECES-BARBA ABRUPTLY QUIT THAT BODY MARCH 6, CHARGING
THAT PROPOSED UCD CHANGES TO ARTICLES ON EDUCATION AND
AUTONOMY IN EFFECT BROKE THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONSENSUS.
THE PSOE'S MOVE, HOWEVER, CLEARLY IS DIRECTLY RELATED
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TO THE GOVT'S OPPOSITION TO AN EXPLICIT TIME FRAME FOR
MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS. PUBLIC WORKS MINISTER GARRIGUES,
WHO EXPRESSED NO PARTICULAR CONCERN OVER THE PSOE'S
GAMBIT, TOLD THE AMBASSADOR MARCH 8 HE BELIEVES SUAREZ
WAS PREPARED TO OFFER THE SOCIALISTS MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS
60 DAYS AFTER THE CONSTITUTION HAD BEEN APPROVED BY
REFERENDUM. END SUMMARY.

2. THE PSOE'S ONLY MEMBER OF THE 7-MAN CONSTITUTION-DRAFTING SUBCOMMITTEE, GREGORIO PECES-BARBA, WITHDREW ABRUPTLY FROM THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON MARCH 6, DURING A SESSION DEVOTED TO CONSIDERATION OF THE SECTION OF THE DRAFT DEALING WITH REGIONAL AUTONOMY. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE ON THE NIGHT OF MARCH 7, PECES-BARBA AND OTHER PSOE LEADERS EXPLAINED HIS ACTION AS DERIVING FROM THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF "MAINTAINING THE FICTION OF A CONSTITUTIONAL CONSENSUS." SPECIFICALLY, THEY BLAMED PSOE DUPLICITY REGARDING THE SECTIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION CONCERNING EDUCATION AND AUTONOMY.

3. ALTHOUGH THESE WERE PRESENTED AS THE FUNDAMENTAL REASONS FOR PECES-BARBA'S WITHDRAWAL, HE REPORTEDLY ALSO ALLUDED TO UCD'S "RUPTURE OF THE AGREEMENT" ON INCLUDING AN EXPLICIT TIME FRAME FOR THE HOLDING OF MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN THE DRAFT MUNICIPAL ELECTION LAW (REFTEL). PRESS SECRETARY JAVIER SOLANA, SPEAKING FOR THE PSOE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, STATED THAT UCD'S RECENT PERFORMANCE IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND INTERIOR SUBCOMMITTEES (THE LATTER DEALING WITH THE MUNICIPAL ELECTION LAW) "CONFIRMS THE THEORY THAT THE GOVT HAS VEERED TO THE RIGHT." HE REPORTEDLY ALSO ALLUDED TO "CONNIVANCE BETWEEN UCD AND AP." EVEN SO, PSOE LEADERS WERE CAREFUL TO INSIST THAT

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PECES-BARBA'S WITHDRAWAL HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE ISSUE OF THE MONARCHY AND THAT IT WOULD HAVE NO EFFECT ON THE PARTY'S PARTICIPATION IN THE MONCLOA PACTS AND IN THE WORK OF THE FULL CONSTITUTIONAL COMMITTEE AND PARLIAMENTARY PLENARIES.

4. SHORTLY AFTER THE PSOE'S PRESS CONFERENCE, THE OTHER 6 MEMBERS OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL SUBCOMMITTEE (3 UCD, 1 AP, 1 CATALAN, 1 COMMUNIST) HELD THEIR OWN PRESS CONFERENCE AND RELEASED A COMMUNIQUE CONTAINING THEIR OWN VERSION OF EVENTS. THE COMMUNIQUE IN EFFECT CHARGES PECES-BARBA, AND BY IMPLICATION THE PSOE, WITH DEALING IN BAD FAITH. ACCORDING TO THE TEXT, PECES-BARBA HAD TOLD THE SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS HE WAS QUITTING OVER DISAGREEMENT CONCERNING THE EDUCATION PROVISIONS, EVEN THOUGH THEY HAD BEEN CONSIDERED SOME DAYS BEFORE, AT WHICH TIME PECES-BARBA HAD EXPRESSED ONLY "MINIMAL" DISAGREEMENT WITH THEM. AS FOR HIS LATER ANNOUNCED DISAPPROVAL OF PROPOSED UCD CHANGES TO THE AUTONOMY PROVISIONS, THE COMMUNIQUE CHARGES THAT PECES-BARBA EXPRESSED NO SUCH DISCREPANCIES AT THE MARCH 6 MEETING. THE REMAINING MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE LAMENT

MR. PECES-BARBA'S DECISION, THE COMMUNIQUE CONCLUDES, BUT FEEL THAT THEY MUST CONTINUE THEIR WORK WITHOUT HIM. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS FROM THE PRESS, MOST OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEY BELIEVED PECES-BARBA HAD ARRIVED AT THE MARCH 6 MEETING WITH INSTRUCTIONS TO WITHDRAW, AND THAT HE HAD ONLY USED EXPRESSED DIFFERENCES OVER THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION TO JUSTIFY HIS EXIT.

5. AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME THAT THE PSOE'S MARCH 7 PRESS CONFERENCE WAS TAKING PLACE, UCD ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE OF ITS OWN IN RESPONSE TO EARLIER PSOE CHARGES THAT UCD HAD BROKEN ITS WORD ON THE QUESTION OF AN EXPLICIT TIME FRAME FOR THE MUNICIPALS AND THREATS OF "POPULAR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MOBILIZATIONS" IF THE TIME FRAME PROVISION WAS NOT

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RESTORED TO THE DRAFT ELECTION LAW (REFTEL). THE COMMUNIQUE, ACCUSING THE PSOE OF "ATTEMPTING IRRESPONSIBLY" TO CAUSE A DETERIORATION OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN ORDER TO COME TO POWER IN THE SHORT TERM, CHARGED INTER ALIA THAT THE SOCIALISTS HAD MANIFESTED CONTEMPT FOR PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY BY THREATENING MASS MOBILIZATIONS. IT ALSO ACCUSED THE PSOE OF TRYING TO "RESUSCITATE THE FATAL DIVISION OF OUR COUNTRY IN TWO BLOCS." THE COMMUNIQUE EMPHASIZED THAT THE GOVT DID NOT SEEK AN "INDEFINITE POSTPONEMENT" OF THE MUNICIPALS, ONLY TO

ENSURE THAT THEY DID NOT INTERFERE WITH THE PRIORITY TASK OF COMPLETING THE CONSTITUTION. IT CONCLUDED BY CALLING ON ALL PARTIES TO "PUT ASIDE ATTITUDES THAT ARE THE PRODUCT OF ELECTORAL MOTIVES AND THAT DO NOT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONTRIBUTE TO THE SOLUTION OF THE GREAT PROBLEMS THAT CONFRONT THE COUNTRY."

7. COMMENT: THE POLITICAL CALENDAR IS CERTAIN TO BE MUCH MORE OF A FACTOR IN PECES-BARBA'S SURPRISE WITHDRAWAL THAN IS DISAGREEMENT OVER THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION, ALTHOUGH IT HAS BEEN CLEAR FOR SOME TIME THAT AUTONOMY AND EDUCATION WILL BE TWO OF THE KNOTTIEST ISSUES ON WHICH TO REACH A CONSENSUS. SUCH A PRECIPITOUS MOVE MAKES LITTLE SENSE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CONSTITUTION DRAFTING PROCESS ALONE, SINCE THE PSOE IS FREE TO MAINTAIN "VOTOS PARTICULARES" ON THOSE ARTICLES WITH WHICH IT DISAGREES AND CAN AIR THOSE DISAGREEMENTS THOROUGHLY IN FULL COMMITTEE AND ON THE PLENARY FLOOR IF NEED BE. THE MOVE CLEARLY IS A STAKES-RAISING "COUP DE THEATRE" CALCULATED TO EMBARRASS THE GOVT, PUT IT ON THE DEFENSIVE, AND FORCE IT TO NEGOTIATE A POLITICAL CALENDAR MORE IN LINE WITH THE PSOE'S PREFERENCES. IN THIS REGARD, PUBLIC WORKS MINISTER GARRIGUES TOLD THE AMBASSADOR PRIVATELY MARCH 8 THAT HE BELIEVED SUAREZ WAS PREPARED TO OFFER THE PSOE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS SIXTY DAYS AFTER THE CONSTITUTION WAS APPROVED BY REFERENDUM. THE PECES-BARBA GAMBIT MAY ALSO BE CALCULATED TO PRODUCE THE DESIRED RESULT BEFORE THE PSOE FINDS ITSELF COMPELLED TO DELIVER ON ITS THREAT TO PUT PEOPLE IN THE STREETS, SOMETHING WHICH THE PARTY PRESUMABLY WANTS TO AVOID.

8. BUT SHIFTING SUCH A PARTISAN POLITICAL DEBATE ONTO CONSTITUTIONAL TERRAIN, WHERE EVERYONE HAS UNTIL NOW BEEN EXTREMELY CAREFUL TO PRESERVE THE STYLE AND SUBSTANCE OF CONSENSUS, ALSO CAN BOOMERANG ON THE PSOE, RAISING MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT ITS POLITICAL

BALANCE AND MATURITY. FOR EXAMPLE, MADRID'S "EL PAIS"
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ON MARCH 8 SUPPORTED THE PSOE'S INSISTENCE ON THE
EXPEDITIOUS HOLDING OF MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, BUT
CHARACTERIZED THE DECISION TO WITHDRAW FROM THE
CONSTITUTIONAL SUBCOMMITTEE AS "UNFORTUNATE,"
"LAMENTABLE" AND "DISPROPORTIONATE." AT ALL EVENTS, THE
DISAGREEMENT OVER THE MUNICIPALS TIME FRAME AND
PECES-BARBA'S EXIT HAS ENGENDERED THE MOST BITING EXCHANGE
OF CHARGES AND COUNTER-CHARGES THAT WE HAVE WITNESSED
HERE SINCE THE EMOTIONALLY CHARGED "JAIME BLANCO AFFAIR"
LAST SEPTEMBER, AND THESE TENSIONS ARE CERTAIN TO BE
REFLECTED IN THIS AFTERNOON'S PARLIAMENTARY PLENARY.
IT IS NOTEWORTHY, HOWEVER, THAT GARRIGUES IN HIS
CONVERSATION TODAY WITH THE AMBASSADOR, EXPRESSED
NO PARTICULAR CONCERN OVER THE PSOE'S ACTION AND
BELIEVED THE SOCIALISTS WOULD NOT SEEK A REAL SHOWDOWN
WITH SUAREZ. IT WAS ALSO CLEARLY IN THE GOVERNMENT'S
INTEREST TO AVOID THIS AS WELL. STABLER

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